

Déjà Vu

Katie S. Watson

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Can love really conquer all? Romance stories love to sigh, “Yes!” But Katie S. Watson writes a romance bold enough to say, “Maybe not.”

Déjà Vu explores love with a twist of adventure by setting her story against one of the Middle East’s longest-standing controversies. Israel’s political struggles form a backdrop for this story about dealing with a romance that isn’t a wise choice.

Zach Montgomery, a millionaire’s son, spends summers during his college and graduate-school years volunteering at an archaeological site in Israel where he can put his budding engineering skills to use. At the site, he meets and falls in love with the archaeologist’s daughter, Ruth Harding, but differences in faith get in the way of their relationship. Both struggle over the future of their relationship, and both must search their hearts and challenge their deepest convictions.

And then things get even more complicated. While conducting his postgraduate work in Jerusalem, Zach is kidnapped by terrorists who hope to make their mark in the Palestinian cause. Zach and Ruth must choose their future and determine where they will take their stands.

Watson, a former pastor’s wife, writes a story steeped in questions of Christianity. The story concept is creative and intriguing, focused on a unique kind of character-driven searching of the soul: an inner debate between Darwinism and Christianity. And in addressing the impact that differences in belief can have on a relationship, she hits on a fascinating subject. Can a relationship survive when people hold different religious views? Well-drawn characters drive the novel as Watson draws readers into her story.

However, there is a significant problem with the dialogue. Characters often do not speak realistically. It’s difficult to imagine an eighteen-year-old, even if he is about to go to Yale, telling another young man he has an “unbecoming proclivity for arrogance” or calling him “persona non grata.”

The cover photo features the author in Israel, and pictures of her family, friends, and sites mentioned in the story pepper the book, diminishing its professionalism. Typos and formatting issues also undermine quality. Although the author wrote the book using voice-recognition software (because of a visual impairment), the lack of editorial guidance is apparent, particularly when the text suddenly reads like a guidebook: “The crypt contains over 200 memorials”; at one point it even lists tour costs and times.

With the issues above corrected, *Déjà Vu* would be a worthwhile read, especially for an audience that appreciates strong elements of faith woven into a romance.

DIANE GARDNER (June 19, 2013)

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